

Authority

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By

JL

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October 29, 1962

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

WITH PRESIDENT KENNEDY:

Yesterday, Sunday morning, President Kennedy called me on the phone to tell me about certain messages that he had received from Khrushchev dealing with the efforts to solve the Soviet-American differences in the Cuban situation. He did not quote to me the exact language of the messages that he had received from the Kremlin but did give their substance. The basic proposal was that Russia would dismantle all its bomb sites in Cuba if, in return, the United States would guarantee that it would not invade Cuba.

The messages received from the Russians contained different provisions but the final one seemed to be a very simple and, the President thought, quite acceptable in general intent. I concurred but told him that I thought our Government should be very careful about defining exactly what was meant by its promises. I observed, since we make a point of keeping our promises, that they should not imply anything more than we actually meant. It would be a mistake, I said, to give the Russians an unconditional pledge that we would, forever and under all conditions, not invade regardless of changing circumstances. For example, I said that if Castro should attack Guantanamo, or if he became active with agents and provocators in Latin American countries, it might become necessary for us to occupy the island.

My impression was that the President understood this and would make certain that we would not be over-committed. ...

I then called John McCone, head of the Central Intelligence Agency, who is normally my contact with the President on matters involving national security and gave him the gist of the conversation, particularly about the reservations that I thought should accompany any all-out promise of ours.

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I said to the President that my own estimate of what might happen would be a Russian effort to drag negotiations to such an extent that we would feel stymied and might be, by world opinion, held on dead center. I therefore said that, in my opinion, the Government should by all means hold the initiative that it had finally seized when it established the quarantine.

He obviously agreed with this thinking because he said this was probably just the first step in a long series of efforts that will have to come about before the thing is settled.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER